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ABSTRACT

Experiences with uncontrollable events may lead to the expectation that future events will elude control, resulting in disruptions in motivation, emotion, and learning. This text explores this phenomenon, termed learned helplessness, tracking it from its discovery to its entrenchment in the psychological canon. The volume summarizes and integrates the theory, research, and application of learned helplessness. The chapters discuss: the phenomena of helplessness and personal control; observations of learned helplessness in animals, including an account of how the condition was first observed in dogs who were repeatedly shocked; the biology of learned helplessness, with an emphasis on biochemical reactions and their effects on organisms; learned helplessness in people, including a meta-analysis of human helplessness studies; the attributional reformulation, which looks at causal explanations and the locus of control; connections between learned helplessness and depression; social problems arising from learned helplessness; correlations between learned helplessness and physical health; and an epilogue which examines the importance of control and some of the disputes surrounding the concept of learned helplessness. Each chapter critically evaluates what is known and not known about relevant topics and offers suggestions for future research. Contains over 550 references, as well as an author index and a subject index. (RJM)

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